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THE
OLD PLANTATION:

A POEM.

BY THE WANDERER.

TURNWOLD, GA.:
COUNTRYMAN PRINT.
1862.

THE PLANTATION

TO
ALL THOSE WHO, LIVING ON
THE OLD PLANTATION,
LOVE IT,
AND TO THOSE WHO,
HAVING FORSAKEN IT, STILL CHERISH
ITS PLEASANT MEMORIES,
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME.
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

A VERY poor thing may be made so much like a very good one, that the counterfeit will unmistakably point out the genuine. I could not, if I would, conceal the fact that this poem is, in its plan, modeled after Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. And even the phraseology of my production may sometimes so nearly approximate that of the sweet singer of home affections, that I shall be accused of downright theft, not only of plan and sentiment, but even of words. If so—so be it. I confess everything of this sort, in advance, and without plea. I lay no claim to originality in what is here offered to the public.

The feelings and sentiments indulged in by me, have so often been the theme of the poet, that it would be very difficult for even genius to invest them with a garb whose tissues had not before been used to weave a garment for impulses to be found in every heart. Not only have I read Goldsmith, but I have read Gray, and others whose productions belong to the school of these. And here I may remark, in passing, that if the *Deserted Village* was not actually the creature of Gray's *Elegy*, it is plain that Goldsmith had read Gray. And it does not require the keen nose of a captious critic, eager upon the scent of a plagiarism, to discover identity of thought and expression in the *Deserted Village*, and the *Elegy*. Goldsmith doubtless wrote with his mind fully imbued with Gray: and I have written after having read and admired both.

This much candor compels me to say. But, at the same time, I must be allowed to say, also, that the sentiments met with in the two poems mentioned, are not peculiar to Goldsmith and Gray. They are to be found in every human bosom. And hence it is that these two authors are so popular. People read their productions, find their own hearts reflected, and then turn to them again, just as they do to a mirror, where they have once beheld the images of their own faces.

The local scenery, manners, and customs here described, I claim to be true to nature: and I have only mingled with my description, sentiments common to us all, and which more favored writers have used, with better effect, before me. But even a poor writer—unless a very poor one indeed—cannot divest the themes of which I have attempted to sing, of all their interest.

The idea of home has peculiar attractions for all. And a home deserted, and in ruins, with the idea of a wanderer pining for old familiar scenes, possesses a melancholy, but pleasant interest to everyone. Hence a poem, founded upon this basis, either dropped from the glowing heart of genius, or fashioned by the polished hand of the artist, has a better chance for success than most others.

Perhaps it might have been better for me, had I named my production *The Old Home*, or *The Deserted Homestead*, or something of the sort, and made the more general ideas of home, as they exist in every locality, the basis of this poem—if I may be pardoned for calling it so. In that event I might have had a wider audience of interested listeners, and possibly of admirers. The probability that this would be so, appealed to my judgment with great strength. But the peculiar type of home enshrined in my heart is that which is to be found in *The Old Plantation*. I love my section—and my

country little less, I hope—though I must confess some less, if by possibility their interests be in collision. But I do not believe they are.

The local manners, customs, and affections of the sunny south—(Heaven's choicest blessings upon her, for here I hold my home, and everything dearest to me!)—have never been as often made the subjects of poesy and song, as they should be. And when some fond son of hers has turned his attention to the stamping of her impress upon the world of letters, it has been too often the case—(I say it with deep sorrow!)—that she has not seen to it that he should not pine in neglect, and be pressed down by critics and criticism inimical to her hearth-stones and her homes. And yet, for all this, I love, and *must* love my section. And for this reason I have endeavored to sing of the *southern* home, instead of the homes of the world. Perhaps it might have been better for me to pursue a different course. Something whispered me it would. A desire for success (common to all authors) and a love for the south strove with each other; but love prevailed: and, in the language of him whose poetry I so much admire, "I must be indulged, at present, in following my affections."

When I had concluded to sing of southern homes, and to call my poem *The Old Plantation*, then, probably, it would have been to my interest to exclude the vexed question of American politics—negro slavery. I advocate the system of slavery as it exists among us. The umpires of literary effort in this country, and in Europe, are opposed to it. The south has no organs of literature, and criticism, whose dicta will either damn or make a poem. Hence it might have been best for me to avoid the question of slavery altogether, since my views upon the subject may serve to taint my production in the eyes of most of my literary censors.

But how could I write a poem depicting southern manners, customs, and institutions, and leave out of view this question? The French monarch said, *L'état, c'est moi!* I say, negro slavery is the south, and the south is negro slavery. The Alps are no more a part of Switzerland than this institution is a part of the south. And you had as well attempt to depict Swiss scenery without mentioning the Alps, as to attempt to describe the south without referring to negro slavery.

But I have not treated this question in an offensive manner. Perhaps what I say, and the spirit in which I say it, may do some good. In this hope I have written. If I can extinguish one spark of animosity between the two *sections*—(unhappy word!)—of my much loved country, I shall have accomplished a great deal.

A word farther, as to the name of my poem.—I am aware that a prose work, bearing the first part of my title, has been published: but I have added the words, "*A Poem*," in order to distinguish between the titles. I had partly written this poem, and had adopted the name, before the prose work was published. And as it is the only one which will answer my entire purpose, I retain it.

THE AUTHOR.

July 17th, 1859.

THE OLD PLANTATION:

A POEM.

Dear sacred spot, secluded vale of shade,
How oft hath fancy, lingering here, delayed,
To trace the scenes of merry childhood o'er,
By memory's magic roused to life once more.
Here, weary wanderer, worn and wasted turned,
I greet the hour for which my heart hath yearned,
Where'er my steps by fortune have been cast,
Blest scenes, my first affection and my last.

The lone wildbird, impelled by autumn's wind,
His first-loved forest leaving, speeds to find
More genial groves to spend a weary hour,
But, pining, longs to see his native bower,
And flies when winter's stormy wind is past,
With hope to find his early home at last.
But in mid air, with panting, weary breast,
Seeking in vain the dear paternal nest,
With drooping plumes he sees his downy home
Felled to the earth, and turns once more to roam;
Yet sadly lingers near the fallen spray,
Whence rosy morn first caught his earliest lay,
Delaying yet, with fond regret, to fly,
And still delaying near his native sky.
So turning from my wanderings, lovely spot,
I seek for childhood's home, but find it not,
Save here and there some remnant trace forlorn,
As parting sun-set leaves the tinge of morn.
Yet all these traces, still to memory dear,
Possess their charms the lonely breast to cheer,
As sad memorials of my childhood's bloom,
Like pulseless marble o'er the cherished tomb.
And so amid these ruins will I roam,
To read the scanty epitaphs of home,
And ere I turn this lovely vale to leave,
Grant me, oh! Heaven, one moment's kind reprieve
From all my wo, awhile to loiter here,
The 'rapturing scenes of early transports near;
To wander mid the haunts of bounding youth,

'The bowers of ease, the seats of love and truth ;
 Here to delay, and fondly still delay—
 One last, long, lingering look, and then away.

To boyhood's scenes, fond mem'ry, turn thy gaze,
 And paint the pleasures of my childish days ;
 By yonder fountain, fold thy weary wing,
 And rest awhile beside the good old spring,
 Whose low rail-pen, half-tottering, stood around,
 As limpid waters all my labor crowned.
 Those gurgling waters pure as crystal were,
 Whose rising vapors cooled the summer's air,
 Where green as emerald was the mossy gnm,
 And laden bees produced their drowsy hum,
 Beneath the oaks that spread their giant arms,
 To bid me welcome to their rustic charms.
 The hang-bird reared her fledglings overhead,
 The log-cock hammered—with his crested red ;
 The humming-bird pursued his airy track,
 The red-wing bunting spread his glossy black ;
 The killdeer whistled by the limpid rill,
 The piper bowed upon its grassy frill ;
 The gold-foot dauber gathered here his mud,
 The fire-bird flitted by, as red as blood.
 My brothers sat beside me on the pen,
 And sisters fond were my companions then ;
 But all are gone—oh ! Heaven, how lonely now,
 Do all my thoughts, and all my feelings bow !

What crowds of memories throng the pregnant mind,
 Though few remaining objects here I find
 Of all that crowned my youthful days with joy,
 And wreathed the hours that lingered round the boy !
 From yon old spring how often have I quaffed
 The cooling beverage, nature's nectared draught,
 Which gods themselves might bend the knee to sip,
 As glorious water kissed the fevered lip.
 But now the fount in cane and rushes hid,
 A stagnant tide spreads tangled grass amid,
 Its heart too weak to drive a silvery vein
 With murmuring pulses toward the watery main.

In yonder grove, where many an aching void
 Betrays the growth by heartless hands destroyed,
 The gnarled trunks by cruel axemen scarred,
 The knotted shafts by mammoth's minions marred,
 With rapturous joy mine eyes once more behold
 Surviving oaks, whose shades were here of old ;
 And still they stand, those giants of the wood,
 Where centuries since in vigorous growth they stood.
 Wrenched by the storms of heaven their waving arms,
 Their wasted boughs despoiled of half their charms,
 Defiant still they rear their branches high,
 And gaze unconquered toward the conquering sky,

Proud monarchs yet that can alike withstand
The blasting storm, and man's destroying hand.

Back to yon spring, once more, my vision turns,
To taste its wave, oh ! how my bosom yearns !
But pure no more these waters may I find,
To rotting rush, and oozy moss consigned.
There flows the brook which bathed my feverish feet,
Its banks perfumed with many a vernal sweet,
The fragrant breath of wild-flowers hovering round,
While nature's Brussels spread the mossy ground.
The aromatic spicewood's tiny bloom
Vied with th' ambrosial sweetshrub's rare perfume,
While the neat hawthorn all its fragrance threw,
And gaudy dogwoods decked the vernal view.
Oh ! happy scene of happier boyhood's days,
How longs my heart for all thy flowery ways ;
From bloom to bloom to chase the gaudy fly,
And breathe the incense of the laden sky.
The bee and butterfly are flitting still,
The hawthorn blooms beside the lessening rill,
But old, familiar objects are decayed,
Where oft my feet with lingering joy delayed,
And I, alas ! am standing all alone,
My loved companions, and my boyhood flown.
The garden walks by weeds are all effaced,
The negro's cottage by decay displaced ;
The dairy stands no more where once it stood,
The axeman's hand has mangled half the wood ;
The moss-choked fountain starves the hungry brook,
And yon old hill, which summer's thunder shook,
Alone the power of tempests can defy,
And mock the terrors of the wasting sky.

Well I remember many a mirthful scene
Of playful children sporting o'er the green,
Beneath the oak that spread a cooling shade,
In summer's flush of foliage bright arrayed.
The generous dog our peaceful sports partook,
Joy in each motion, love in every look,
A faithful friend misfortune could not try,
A loyal servant money could not buy.
How oft, when boyish fancy made me roam,
The faithful fellow bayed me welcome home,
Frisked round my steps, and gamboled as I came,
And eager rushed, the first embrace to claim.
For many years, old friend, thy dust has slept,
By stranger hearts, and stranger eyes unwept,
But in my mind, thine image aye hath been,
And in my heart thy memory still is green.
Art thou all dead, or in a better land,
Dost thou beside my gentle father stand,
Waiting to greet the weary wanderer home,
When here my wayworn feet shall cease to roam ?

To bay me welcome, as thou didst of yore,
When all my wo, with all my wandering's o'er?

Well I remember all the grunting swine,
The playful calves amid the lowing kine;
The lazy pig that wallowed in the mud,
The sober cow that chewed her savory cud,
Or waded through the cooling wave she drank,
To crop the flower upon the mossy bank;
The dairy that received the liquid store,
The snowy vessels full, and flowing o'er;
Aunt Tabby striving, stately as a queen,
To keep her milk-pans burnished bright and clean,
Her sable bosom heaving high with pride,
Where stood the churn and dasher by her side.
Wo to the little darkey who should dare
To visit, or invade her kingdom there:
A shout and slap announced her queenly frown,
And knocked the luckless black intruder down.
Yet she was kind, and when the milk was churned,
Out in a troop the little negroes turned,
Armed with a tin-cup each, to get his share
Of Granny's scolding, and the homely fare.
On foaming butter-milk, and smoking bread,
Baked in the ashes, each was fully fed,
Beneath the tree, all seated on the ground,
With grass, and grateful shadow spread around,
Nor these alone the rustic fare partook,
The master's children daintier meals forsook,
And Granny laughed to see the youngsters hie,
To feast where mirth and frolic waited by;
To eat the ashcake which she kindly gave
The little master with the little slave,
All gaily happy in their boisterous glee,
As equals 'neath the old familiar tree.

Blest in his lowly, and his happy lot,
The negro here possessed a cheerful cot,
Which gave him shelter for his humble head,
While daily toil supplied him bounteous bread:
Here was the garden with its scented thyme,
And all the flowers that bless the southern clime;
The luscious fruit upon the tangled vine,
Whose mellowing juice produced the rustic wine;
Here all the scenes that blessed my boyish heart,
And freighted bliss to pleasure's crowded mart;
But things are changed, and mouldering, sure decay
Is sweeping all these lovely scenes away.

Where all this vale was once instinct with life
No more we hear the hum of busy strife,
But mouldering walls are trembling in decay,
And whip-poor-wills discourse their lonely lay.
Adown yon roof the creeping ivy falls,

And bats depend upon the tottering walls,
While hooting owls their midnight orgies hold,
Then, in the day their sombre pinions fold
On mossy timbers rotting overhead,
Their dozy dreams on some dull fancy fed.
By day the partridge whistles in the wood,
By night the rabbit crops his tender food,
Or rambles o'er this lonely vale uncurbed,
While the coy weasel wanders undisturbed.
By moonlight, here the skulking possum comes,
Here the sly fox, a shadowy spectre, roams,
And, to the wind, at dismal dead of night,
Bays forth his desolation, mid the blight
That, like some bird of evil omen, spreads
His giant wings, and, in their shadow, sheds
The baleful influence of a dark decay,
Where ruin's sceptre holds despotic sway.
And, oft commingled, all these doleful sounds,
The traveller, passing by these shadowy grounds,
With trembling hears, at twilight, or at dawn,
And, panic-stricken, flies the haunted lawn.

This ruin fills my shrinking heart with dread,
And turns my thoughts to wander with the dead;
From pleasant fields, which bliss was roaming o'er,
Fate drives the trembler through her jarring door;
Then turns to rouse within my breast the wo,
Which slumbered, lulled by memory's genial glow,
And points with scorn to friends that moulder here,
With boding lines of spectres hovering near,
The phantom host which dark despair arrays,
When hope withdraws, and palls her genial blaze.

My flowing joys, alas! too soon congealed,
Look back and find their miser fountain sealed,
So soon that fountain ceases its supply,
And leaves my freezing pleasures all to lie
In icy chains, and shrouding fetters bound,
Like corpses scattered o'er the spectral ground.

Oft when the woodman with unfeeling blow,
Leaves on the ground, with cheerless ice, and snow,
Some luckless tree, to die mid wind, and rain,
As winter goes, it seeks to bloom again;
The scanty sap flows through its fibry veins,
And swells its buds, amid congenial rains;
The flowers half burst, and then the gladdening tree,
Amid its gay companions, smiles to see
The bloomy flush of fast returning spring,
With life, and hope upon her balmy wing.
With loving faith, its beaming face it turns,
To catch the streams of life for which it yearns,
But, finding that in vain it seeks supplies,
It droops its disappointed head, and dies.

So here, at first, on fancy's wing returned
The spring of youth, my yearning bosom burned
With all of joyful hope's electric glow,
And felt the streams of bliss began to flow,
Fill up my breast, meander through my veins;
Drive out my sorrows, dissipate my pains,
And from hope's buds, which slept in wintry gloom,
The flowers of bliss once more began to bloom.
But, ah ! my joys soon lost the scanty flow
Of life that caused these genial flowers to blow,
And, roused to ponder time's relentless change,
Now hopeless o'er the paths of youth I range.
My withered hopes, like flowers upon the ground,
Lie mouldering with these mouldering ruins round :
Yet here, one hour, dear home of brighter days,
I'll linger, led through memory's magic maze,
Recount the joys, renew the scenes of youth,
And blink the stern reality of truth.
Haply the task may rouse some slumbering joy
That used to haunt the visions of the boy,
And hope once more, perchance, the sceptre grasp;
And me, the wanderer, to her bosom clasp,
Too happy if but for one moment free—
Small boon, 'tis true, but all enough for me—
And then I'll turn, a pilgrim once again,
And leave the shades of this long-cherished plain,
An exiled stranger from his native sky,
Upon some foreign strand to droop and die.

In happier days, here from the cottage fire,
The wreathing smoke sent up its airy spire.
With upward instincts, clambering toward the sky,
In rich luxuriance trained to mount on high,
The fragrant woodbine round the chimney twined,
And mossy stones in graceful folds enshrined.
Nor even now the vine is wholly dead;
Creeping slow-paced along the mossy shed,
Torn from the chimney by some blasting storm,
Despoiled by winds of half its ancient form.
The hand that trained it, moulders 'neath the sod,
The heart that loved it gladdens by its God ;
But grateful scions from the parent vine,
The humble cotter's peaceful grave enshrine,
Transplanted by some loved and tender hand,
Where tomb-stones chiseled but by nature stand ;
Those granite fragments, mossy, gray, and rude,
That mark the spot where angel pinions brood,
Guarding the rest of humble sleepers where
Too close obtrudes the sacrilegious share.
Even now I hear the rustle of their plumes,
Fanning the odor from these rustic blooms,
Bending the shrubbery and the garden flowers,
That yet are spared to decorate yon bowers ;

That fringe the charnel where the waving corn
Sheds pearly tears, embalmed by dewy morn,
To think that man will thus the place invade,
Where brother man's departed life is laid.

Oh ! thing of life, oh ! animated vine,
Embowering still this consecrated shrine,
Content to leave the spires that pierce the sky,
And humbly o'er the cotter's grave to lie,
Dear emblem thou of friendship's noblest state,
Forsaking place with lowly loved to wait,
Stooping from height to guard the feeble breast,
Quitting thy pride to make the humblest blest,
Clasping thy tendrils o'er the lowliest grave,
Mindful alike of master and of slave,
How pants my heart to rest its sorrow here,
With closing autumn, and the opening year,
With thee, fast friend, to linger near me still,
When in the tomb my heart hath ceased to thrill.
Rather by far my dust should slumber here,
Than where the urns of sculptured art appear,
Where marble piles their grandeur rear on high,
And leave the heart in desolate pomp to lie ;
Than in the abbey, where, in regal state,
The monarch lies in futile splendor great,
Leaving a name for history's page in vain
To varnish o'er, and gloss his vicious reign.
But useless thought ! the stranger owns the soil,
And here my heart may never rest its toil.
Intruder now, while life prolongs its sway,
Intruder more, when life has ebb'd away,
I may not rest where all these loved ones rest,
Thou, friendly vine, may'st never clasp my breast.

Oh ! could I leave one living friend to weep,
When in the ground these weary members sleep,
'Twere dearer far than though my name were high,
On fame's proud shaft that pierced the bending sky.
But none I have ! No living being knows,
Much less would care, for all the wanderer's woes :
Yet when I die, to friendly dust consigned
This dust shall be, and the immortal mind
Will spurn the worm, escape the dungeon sod,
And trust its fate to mercy and to God.

Here, 'neath these oaks, primeval sentries where
The Indian slept, the wolf embowered his lair,
O'ershadowing all, with arms of giant frame,
The fearless settler, tyrant-hunted came,
His lot amid entangled wilds to cast,
Chilled by the rains, and tortured by the blast.
Keen blew the winds when winter brought his snow,
And summer's flowers with autumn ceased to blow :

But wind and tide were evils light as air,
Compared with these which hearts in fetters bear.

The man by Heaven for freedom when designed,
Enslaved no joy in thralldom's path may find,
Save when high hope commands him burst his chain,
And give his heart to freedom's joy again :
Then high resolve may make his bosom blest,
Though still with chains the prisoner be opprest.
Yet stolid hearts, to every feeling dull,
Supplying veins of sluggish languor full,
That need must have a guardian's fostering hand,
To give them homes, and answer want's demand—
Designed by Heaven to wear a master's chain,
May wear it softly, and be rid of pain :
Nay, 'tis their bliss to have some power to lead,
To guard them, give them raiment, and to feed.

Not so with him who sought the western wild,
Born to be free, by bondage made her child :
His birth-right freedom, his the freeman's glow,
A tyrant linked his heart to slavery's wo.
But scorning chains, he sought the western world,
Tossed by the tide, and by the tempest hurled ;
Small evils these, if freedom's halo shed
Its genial beams around his manly head :
Let him be free, and thunders loud might roll,
And drive his shattered bark from pole to pole.
Such thoughts as these the exile's breast inspired,
While freedom all his glowing passion fired :
For freedom's sake he crossed the envious brine,
And to his goddess reared an humble shrine ;
His cot beside the sacred altar reared,
And round his door the useless timber cleared ;
But felling trees, reserved the needed shade,
The artist's with the laborer's skill displayed.

Back go my thoughts to memories of the child,
How 'mid his toil my weary father smiled ;
How sighed my mother when his back was turned,
As for her native land her bosom yearned ;
Yet would she meet her husband with a smile,
And veil her griefs with well dissembling wile.
Well I remember, round our forest home,
The worm-fence yard I careless used to roam ;
The roof of boards, the wooden-hinged door,
The smoky rafters, and the rugged floor ;
The tall old clock which in the corner stood,
The table made of rudely-shapen wood ;
The trusty rifle hanging on the rack,
The hearth of stone, the broad, old sooty back.
Well I remember how the Indian's yell,
With terror fraught, came sweeping down the dell ;
The manly grasp which clutched the gun and knife,

Prepared to guard the helpless babe and wife.
The wolf's wild cry do I remember well,
The panther's scream, intoned with notes of hell;
The fox's bark, the congar's maddening howl,
The fiendish laugh of the demoniac owl;
The serpent's rattle, and the fawn's light bound,
The watchful cur-dog, and the hunting hound.
Well I remember many a brindled hide,
And antlered trophy on the cottage side;
The bear's meat brought to grace the rustic board,
The larder with the fattest venison stored.

To share our toils did other settlers come,
Exchanging fetters for a forest home;
Hard by our cot, the giant trees they cleared,
And humble huts with busy labor reared.
Each aided each, commingling needed toil,
To fell the timber, break the virgin soil,
A fruitful store which paid their labors well,
Clad all the hill, and lined the blooming dell,
Since Heaven well pleased, with gifts propitious smiled,
And crowned an Eden, where there frowned a wild.
The wild subdued, the Indian forced away,
The savage beast no more pursued his prey,
And where the cougar's maddening howl was heard,
There came the notes of the wild warbling bird,
A living joy for man's companion fit,
Around his door in sunny hours to flit,
Or cheer his toil beneath the frowning cloud,
Herald of hope, when winter spreads his shroud.

Where tangled vines once walled the settlers round,
The snowy cotton all the valley crowned,
And golden wheat, and the luxuriant corn,
And queenly flowers that triumphed o'er the thorn.
Where once the Indian pierced his bleeding prey,
With plumed shaft, the plough assumed the sway,
And flowing wealth in fattening coffers poured,
Built costlier homes, and barns with plenty stored.
The church was built, the sacred altar reared,
The gospel preached, Jehovah loved and feared,
While learning came, and with its potent rod,
Enlarged the mind, yet kept the heart to God.

Soon as the morning lent its rosy ray,
To yonder grove, the children held their way,
Where, hid in shade, the consecrated hall,
To learning sacred, reared its humble wall.
In neat attire, from many a happy home,
Along yon lane the smiling youngsters come,
Where browsing cows obstruct the narrow path,
Fit objects for the dire, destructive wrath,
That rages in each hero's mighty breast,
With gallant thought, and high resolve oppressed.

Their kindling wrath desires some good excuse,
 Ere they shall turn their heaving anger loose,
 And easy 'tis a good excuse to find,
 For doing that to which the heart's inclined :
 Lo ! 'tis enough ! the cows that dared to cross
 The path they tread, turn, in the air to toss
 Their harmless heads, as on the youngsters go,
 In eager search for cause to strike a blow.
 The girls shrink back, with trembling and dismay,
 And beg the boys to drive the cows away,
 When on they rush, responsive to the call,
 With eager feet, upon the foe to fall.
 Down on the cows with cruel charge they bend,
 And dust and carnage on their steps attend,
 While lifted clubs, and clouds of volleyed stones
 Storm round the citadels of flesh and bones.
 Soon routed in the most unequal fight,
 With safe, albeit with ignoble flight,
 The cows avoid the missiles flying round,
 And spurn behind them the receding ground.
 The foemen vanquished, with endearing wiles
 The girls the gallant heroes load with smiles.
 Happy the heart that woman's smiles shall cheer,
 In age mature, or in the opening year,
 Man's best reward, in boyhood's early spring,
 Or when his years make haste on winter's wing.

Upon the green, which spreads around the door,
 The gathering crowds of boys begin to pour,
 Upon their arms the burnished bucket hung,
 Around their necks the tattered satchel swung,
 While merry laughter rends the morning sky,
 And drives the circling purple bounding high.
 The teacher comes—with merry, tinkling call
 The silvery bell-notes on their clamor fall,
 Call them to books, and bid them cease their sport,
 To wait attendance on their master's court.

High on his throne, with proud, disdainful eye,
 The monarch sees his subjects passing by,
 With rude turmoil crowd in the narrow door,
 And hurry striding o'er the trembling floor
 To where the greasy water-bucket stands,
 And grasp the gourd with soiled and eager hands.
 Now on the floor the liquid store they waste,
 Large draughts now swallow with indecent haste ;
 Not that they're thirsty, but because they think,
 As one has drunk, they everyone must drink.
 The master chides the loiterers to their seats,
 And oft his fiery, threatening words repeats.
 He'd flog them all, but that with eager zest,
 Some favorite child is sinning with the rest,
 And for whose sake is spared the pushing crowd,
 With less of fortune and of rank endowed.

With growling grand, the tyrant master reigned,
The sceptre swayed, and matchless grandeur feigned,
Some vagrant from New England with his rod,
Forcing each child a weary way to plod,
Save when some favorite found a golden path,
And thus escaped the master's direful wrath.
On benches low, the pupils ranged around,
The scowling teacher many a terror frowned,
Yet on his wealthy patron's darling smiled,
But flogged the shoulders of the humbler child,
Or pulled his ears, or boxed his glowing jaws,
The little trembler dreaming not the cause,
Knowing not yet how sinful to be poor,
And not possessed of mammon's magic store.
With angry brow, and pompous, high demeanor,
The master drove all pleasure from the scene,
Befogged the pupils with the Rule of Three,
And mystified them all from A to Z.
The birch applied with many a zealous hit,
He sought to burnish every dullard's wit,
Thinking to learning that the nearest track
Was that which lay across an urchin's back.
But truth to say, this generous trait he had,
To fear the youth, and domineer the lad;
And when the large boys angry grown amid,
He flogged the small for what the larger did.

But sweet revenge the watchful boys enjoyed,
And many a joke the tyrant's peace destroyed,
And oft as some annoying trick was played,
What was design to accident they laid.
Now would they munch, from pockets slyly drawn,
Their thefts from trees upon the neighboring lawn,
Hold up their books to hide the stolen fruit,
And let their neighbors bite to keep them mute.
With pins they filled the master's cushioned chair,
And rubbed molasses where 'twould smear his hair;
With paper stuffed, to silence thus, his bell,
And bribed the little fellows not to tell.
Some fastened placards on his coat behind,
With stones and rubbish all his pockets lined;
Some bolder boy would draw his homely face,
And post the picture in some public place,
A horrid thing, a wonder in its way,
With ears prolonged, and open mouth to bray.

And now the master to his neighboring home,
For dinner gone, the laughing roisterers roam
O'er field and wood, with free and happy air,
Searching each scene for pleasure's daintiest fare.
Some press the maids, who rudely snatch away,
Yet manage for one moment to delay,
Coily enraged that one should dare to taste

Of willing lips, or zone the anxious waist,
Now 'neath the shade they spread the ample store,
Their buckets cleared of good things running o'er;
The nice broiled ham, the biscuit crisp and brown,
The hard-boiled eggs, all swiftly swallowed down;
Fried chicken, too, the savory breast and wing,
And butter-milk cooled in the neighboring spring,
Whose waters gurgle to supply the school,
And keep the bottled snowy fluid cool.

Their meals despatched, to various sports they rise,
And merry voices rend the ringing skies;
Their trundled hoops yon youthful party trace,
In prison base those smaller fellows race;
Beneath yon tree, some sprawl upon the ground,
While marbles shoot, and tops are spinning round.
Yon party rear their kites upon the wind,
With boisterous pleasure bubbling from the mind;
Here round the house, these wantons chase the pig,
In yonder field, those filch the blushing fig;
Some toss the ball, then rally for the chase.
With eager feet, and smiling, glowing face;
Those little boys, the saplings bending down,
Call them their horses that they ride to town,
Which rear, and curvet, as their riders spring,
And up and down with fiery motion swing.
The girls, confined to fewer sports than these,
Play with their dolls beneath the shady trees,
While one, perforce, with cunning steals away,
Where yonder youthful lover feigns to play,
Till hid the blooming hawthorn bush behind,
A moment's fond delay the couple find,
Exchange a kiss, and think themselves unseen,
But hear the jibe, and blush with bashful mien,
For yonder group upon the covert steal,
And jeer the pleasure they would like to feel.

A beardless youth, with boyish griefs forlorn,
His heart, perchance, by sad misfortune torn,
Forsook the snows that bound his frigid home,
Amid the flowers of milder climes to roam.
The stranger youth, received with open arms,
Here, in this vale, enjoyed its rustic charms;
Here taught the youth committed to his charge,
'Mid favors many, and a bounty large,
Since generous people heeded wants demand,
And blessed the stranger with a liberal hand.
At all their boards he shared the social cheer,
With all the pleasures friendship fostered here,
And boundless favor smiled his feet around,
While ready welcome aye his coming crowned.
But time rolled on, the youth a man became,
And won his way to fortune and to fame,
With hatred every act of kindness paid.

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